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Expressions Through Art

In “Art Is a Different Kind of Cosmic Order,” theoretical physicist Brian Greene points out that “Mathematics is a universal language of pattern,” so all mathematical patterns would look similar in all instances to aliens. With art however, he claims only humans can understand its intricate patterns and details; only humans can experience an emotional reaction of greatness beyond all possibility of calculation or measurement, which is referred to as the sublime. In other words, it “refers to a ‘realm of experience beyond the measurable’ that is beyond rational thought, that arises chiefly from the terrors and awe-inspiring natural phenomena” (“Sublime (Literary)”). With this, we can conclude art is what makes us who we are; in other words, our ability to look at seemingly random patterns and find emotional meaning within oneself.

Born on July 19, 1789 and died on February 17, 1854, artist John Martin was part of the romanticism movement, and was best known for his grand sense of scale in his artwork. In his paintings he depicts religious and historical events, usually exaggerated in proportion.



Fig. 1. Martin, John. *Belshazzar's Feast*. c.1821
<https://collections.britishart.yale.edu/catalog/tms:924>.

Within *Belshazzar's Feast*, Martin depicts said Biblical event, in which King Belshazzar of Babylon holds a final feast for his thousand lords after the looting and destruction of the Solomn's Temple. Martin's use of proportion and scale allows the viewer to feel a great sense of awe and dread. Looking



Fig. 2. Martin, John. *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum*. c.1822

In *The Destruction of Pompeii and Herculaneum* (see fig.2), instead of depicting a religious event such as *Belshazzar's Feast*, Martin depicts the real event of Mt. Vesuvius's eruption and following destruction of Pompeii. He uses this disaster to make the viewer feel, despite the tragedy, at awe at the volcano, depicting it as almost ethereal through the use of color.



Fig. 3. Martin, John. *Satan Presiding at the Infernal Council*. c.1823-1827

Finally, we go back to religion in *Satan Presiding at the Infernal Council* (see fig.3). Unlike *Belshazzar's Feast*, Martin uses repetition, color, and scale in his painting to instead invoke the viewer with terror. Unlike the previous paintings, this one has no color other than black and white, and Martin expertly uses this to direct the viewer's attention to specific areas. His use of scale is used differently in this painting, using it in this painting to enhance the ominous and dreadful nature of it. Satan himself is the main point of focus, being in the center of the painting. His hand leads up to the chandeliers, which illuminates him

These three works of Martin emphasizes the exaggeration humans tend to

Works Cited

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